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Something for Everyone: Memories of Lauerman Brothers Department Store

Matthew Lindaman
Winona State University

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Something for Everyone: Memories of Lauerma Brothers Department Store, by Michael Leannah. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2013. xx, 204 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, index. \$22.95 hardcover.

Reviewer Matthew Lindaman is professor of history at Winona State University. He is the author of "First the War, Then the Future: Youngers Department Store and the Projection of a Civic Image during World War II" (*Annals of Iowa*, Winter 2014).

The twenty-first-century consumer landscape is dominated by big box stores such as Walmart, warehouse behemoth Amazon, and fast-food restaurants. These entities have displaced the twentieth-century shopping experience of the regional department stores. Michael Leannah's *Something for Everyone* waxes nostalgic as he seeks to capture the vanishing history of iconic regional department stores, focusing on the Lauerma Brothers Department Store of Marinette, Wisconsin, as a case study in what has been lost.

Employing the store's advertising slogan, *Something for Everyone*, as the title of his book, Leannah underscores the versatility of Lauerma Brothers, which enjoyed a nearly 100-year reign as the anchor of Marinette's main street square. Multiple departments, ranging from shoes to paint and wallpaper, filled the three-story, ornate building. The entire operation included a popular lunch counter, known for its frosted malted milk cones, a doughnut machine located on the first floor, talking Christmas trees during the build-up to the holiday season, and an overflow warehouse.

Leannah argues that much was lost in the transition to twenty-first-century consumerism as managers and corporate CEOs figured out how to logistically move larger amounts of bulk goods at cheaper prices, thus displacing the regional department stores. "Of course, the owners of Wal-Mart and Shopko aren't seen on the city's sidewalks or in the next pew over in church on Sunday," the author wryly notes (42). Specifically, he underscores the loss of personal service, human connections, and civic engagement, all parts of Lauerma Brothers' success and history. Dozens of the store's employees, many of whom worked for the Lauerma family for decades, are named to underscore the importance of service and personal connections. Although the employees were known by their real names, they were even better known, perhaps most tellingly and comfortingly, as the store's own "Maytag Man" or "Lunch-Counter Lady." As for the Lauerma family, Leannah argues, "Unlike the business executives of today, the Lauerma's were stitched into the fabric of the community of Marinette" (42).

Chapters covering the store's advertising and civic engagement initiatives are the richest in source materials and anecdotal evidence.

Leannah deftly traces the evolution in Lauermans' advertising campaigns, starting in the 1890s. "Always a little cheaper than the cheapest" (136) was the store's mantra, and for decades Lauerman Brothers held itself to the slogan while drawing customers and turning a handsome profit, which in turn was invested back into the community. In the chapter covering the store's civic initiatives, readers learn that the Lauerman family supported the Marinette Bijou Theatre, sponsored a semiprofessional football team in the 1920s, and donated money to Marinette's parks and football stadium. Friday evenings in Marinette belonged to Lauerman Brothers as it was the social place to be during the evening's extended business hours.

From the 1920s to the 1940s, Lauermans' expanded its regional and even national reach. Iowa readers will be interested to note that a Lauerman Brothers store existed in Waterloo, Iowa, during the 1920s and 1930s, the biggest of over a dozen Lauerman branch stores. By the 1950s, the Lauerman family also included a prosperous Marinette Knitting Company, which held exclusive rights to produce Disney clothing, in its portfolio.

Leannah does a great job of chronicling the social and cultural history of Lauerman Brothers Department Store as an iconic institution, although the book should not be taken as a scholarly history. It is devoid of notes, while offering a casual approach to the subject that makes it easy to read. The author's main sources include newspaper advertisements and articles supplemented by personal interviews with past employees. Readers who fondly remember a bygone shopping era dominated by regional, flagship department stores will not be disappointed.

The Church and the Land: The National Catholic Rural Life Conference and American Society, 1923–2007, by David S. Bovée. Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2010. xiii, 399 pp. Tables, illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$79.95 hardcover or e-book.

Reviewer Philip J. Nelson is adjunct professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa. His research interests include soil conservation and communitarian thought and movements.

The Jeffersonian ideal of the vital, propertied, middle-class farm family as the cornerstone of the republic and backbone of society has resonated down through American history. The belief system associated with it attained mythic status even as America became a largely urbanized, commercial colossus. The viability of a large class of independent, semi-self-sufficient farmers was threatened as early as the 1920s. In response, a whole host of individuals and organizations joined a